

*The Christian's Triumph over Death, and
the Grave.*

A
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the DEATH of

ANTHONY WALBURGE, Esq;

LATE

TREASURER

OF

St. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL.

PREACHED AT

EDMONTON,

July 9, 1749:

By SAMUEL SAVAGE.

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I COR. XV. 55.

*O Death, where is thy Sting? O
Grave, where is thy Victory?*

THE natural, and moral Arguments which are commonly produced, as Proofs of the Soul's Immortality; are what some of the wisest Men, among the Heathens, have freely acknowledged the Weight of. But that these frail Tabernacles, which we bear about us, shall, after their approaching Dissolution, be rebuilt by the Maker of all Things, and reunited to those spiritual Substances, from which they were separated; is a Doctrine of pure Revelation. But, however astonishing this may appear to those; who are inclined to set Bounds to the Power of God; the Apostle shews that it is by no Means impossible to the Maker of all Things, who created Matter at first out of nothing, moulded a Portion of that Matter into the Form of a human Body, and breathed into it the Breath of Life.

St. PAUL, having declared the Possibility of a Resurrection, in general, from the Consideration of God's Omnipotence; proceeds to prove the Certainty of Christ's Resurrection in particular, and to discover the mighty Importance thereof. If our Saviour, in Consequence of his Death, had remained a Prisoner to the Grave; the other Arguments produced, as Testimonials of the Truth of Christianity, would have been defective, and insufficient to build our Faith upon. The Resurrection of Christ therefore being an important Fact, upon which the Truth of the Gospel depends; various Witnesses are mentioned as a Confirmation thereof, whose Testimony cannot be reasonably disputed.

AFTER having produced these Witnesses, the Apostle proceeds to shew, that the Resurrection of Christ was to be considered as an Earnest or Pledge of our Resurrection; and intimates to us, that our Bodies shall be raised, with very great Alterations and Circumstances of Advantage; and become fit Organs or Instruments of our Souls most exalted Operations. It was this transporting Prospect, which gave Occasion to the triumphant Exclamation in the

the Text; *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* Where is the Sting of Death, as it respects the Soul, if Sin, in which the Bitterness thereof consists, is taken away? And where is the Triumph of the Grave, if, by a Resurrection, it must dismiss our imprisoned Bodies?

FROM these Words, to which I have introduced you, by a brief Consideration of the Context; I purpose to inform you,

I. *UPON what particular Accounts, Death is the Object of Men's Dread in general.*

II. *WHY it is, in a peculiar Manner, formidable to Sinners.*

III. *TO what it is owing, that the Fear of Death is so far subdued in good Men.*

I. *I SHALL inform you; upon what particular Accounts, Death is the Object of Men's Dread in general.*

By Death, I do not only mean the Separation of Soul and Body, but also such Evils as are introductory to, and consequent upon that Separation. There are two Things more especially, which render Death frightful to Mankind; and these are the Nature of it, and of those Evils, which are its usual Harbingers and Attendants; and the Consequences thereof.

1. *DEATH becomes frightful to Mankind, when they consider its Nature, and the Nature of those Evils, which are its usual Harbingers or Attendants.*

DEATH, as hath been already hinted, consists in the Separation of Soul and Body, or the Dissolution of our present Frame. It is this Separation or Dissolution, that the wise Man speaks of, when he assures us, that *the Dust* (meaning the Body) *shall return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit unto God who gave it*, Eccl. xii. 7. Nothing seems more universal and natural to Mankind, than the Principle of Self-preservation, and a Desire in particular of preserving their Beings; and it is reasonable to expect, that the Fear of Death should bear a Proportion to the Desire of Life.

Life. No Doubt there are weighty Reasons, why the Author of our Beings hath implanted in our Natures a strong Aversion to a Dissolution; it is certain, without such an Aversion, we should be negligent of our Lives, and regardless of many Dangers which threaten them. And though this Dread may be, and sometimes is wholly overcome, by Arguments drawn from an unseen World; yet the Case is far from being common, even among good Men.

If Persons should bring themselves to believe, that they shall have no future Existence, but that their Beings shall be wholly extinguished, when they have done with this present World; though this Misapprehension would deliver them from the Fears of future Misery, yet ceasing to be, and sinking into eternal Silence and Oblivion, is so melancholy and distressing a Thought; that I apprehend the greatest Part of Mankind, rather than lose all Remembrance of Things past, and be wholly forgotten themselves, would chuse to exist under very disadvantageous Circumstances. And if it appears, by contemplating the Nature of Death, that it is to be considered as our Enemy, and Matter
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of our Dread ; those bodily Disorders which are gradually weakening this present Frame, and which, together with many sudden and unforeseen Accidents, are the usual Forerunners of the King of Terrors ; will be considered in the same Light.

2. *DEATH is also frightful to human Nature, on Account of its Consequences ; some of which I shall take Notice of, under the following Particulars.*

1. ONE Consequence of Death, which makes it disagreeable to Mankind, is, that it deprives them of the Enjoyments of the present Life.

THOSE who have no Appetite to intellectual Pleasures, nor Relish of manly Delights ; and who promise themselves nothing greater or better, from temporal Enjoyments, than the Indulgence of their ungoverned Lusts ; may well be averse to part with such Enjoyments, because they will meet with nothing of this Kind in the future State : For what they falsely esteemed their principal Happiness, must conclude with their Lives.

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NAY such as do, in a good Measure, govern their Inclinations and Affections, by the Rule of God's Word, and use the good Things of this Life with a Degree of Moderation, proportioned to the Nature and Importance thereof; though they prosecute the invisible Glory, as the Consummation of their Happiness, yet they linger, and with some Reluctance take their Leave of Earth. If Men are possessed of a large Portion of temporal good Things, by the Indulgence of Providence; if they have many desirable Friends, and enjoy a great Degree of Health and Reputation; these Circumstances do for the most Part render their present Situation so agreeable to them, that they are ready to say : *It is good for us to be here.* Which Considerations shew the Necessity of a lively and vigorous Faith, and of strong Desires, with Respect to the unseen Glory; if we would break loose from the Enchantment of Objects round about us.

2. ANOTHER Consequence of Death, which renders it frightful to human Nature, is, that it delivers Persons over to a future Judgment.

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OUR Constitution, and the present Condition of human Nature, sufficiently prove that we are accountable Creatures ; and that we must be subject to the Government and Judgment of the supreme Ruler. And if, in Consequence of such a Judgment, God will reward, or punish us, agreeable to our past Actions ; it concerns us frequently to consider the main Tenour of those Actions, in Order to discover what our future Lot and Portion shall be.

I MAY have a more proper Occasion, in the following Part of this Discourse, to shew what Effect the Apprehension of a future Judgment will have, upon Persons eminently good, or remarkably wicked, whose Consciences are supposed plainly to predict what will be the final Issue of Things as to themselves. I shall therefore confine myself at present to the Consideration of those who are supposed, upon sufficient Grounds, to be more doubtful both of their present State, and also of that future Condition, which will be the Consequence thereof. In Men of this Character, there is such a Mixture of
Good

Good, and Evil ; that it seems dubious which of them prevails. They have some good Resolutions, but those Resolutions are often over-powered by the Force of present Temptations. They transgress, and then repent of those Transgressions ; recover from their Lapses, and, in a little Time, sin afresh. They carefully avoid those Crimes, which the World generally esteems most scandalous ; but too often neglect private Duties. And in this doubtful and uncertain Condition, in which Men know not what to pronounce concerning their own Character, their Minds must needs be in a fluctuating State ; there must be a quick Succession of Hopes, and Fears, as to the Event of the grand Affize. And, how distressing a Thought is it to be in Darkness and Suspense, in a Matter of such mighty Moment ? To be uncertain, and therefore anxiously concerned what will become of them for ever, when their Bodies drop into the Grave ? To be summoned hence, before they are able to determine whether a Sentence of Absolution, or Condemnation shall hereafter pass upon them ; must strangely rack and torture the human Mind.

3. **ANOTHER** Consequence of Death, which makes it frightful to Mankind, is, that it will convey them into an unseen, and, in a great Measure, unknown State.

THE Thoughts of a Dissolution are not only discouraging to those, who are in Doubt about a future State; but also to such, who, while they acknowledge such a State, know not what their own Lot in it shall be. Nay, this Thought is apt to cast a Damp upon their Minds, who have pleasing Hopes of a happy Existence hereafter; that they know not in particular the Nature, the Constitution, Laws, and Employment of the celestial Kingdom.

THOUGH we are persuaded both of the Certainty, and Greatness of the promised Happiness; yet since it will consist in the Enjoyment of Pleasures, which we have had no Knowledge or Experience of; it will probably be with some Reluctance that we make an Exchange of known, for unknown Delights. Tho' Reason and Revelation give us the greatest

est Encouragement to confide in the Promises of God, in Relation to future Blessedness; yet the Weakness of our Faith, and our imperfect Manner of Conception incline us to shrink back, when the last Enemy makes its Approach.— Thus I have informed you, from the Consideration of the foregoing Particulars, on what Accounts Death is an Object of Dread to Mankind in general.— I now proceed,

II. To inform you why, or upon what Accounts, Death is peculiarly formidable to Sinners, or wherein the Sting of it consists as to them.

IT cannot be concealed, that some good Men are shocked at the Appearance of Death, while notorious Transgressors seem to be under little or no Concern about it; and the Reason of both is obvious, because both of them mistake their Case; the one concluding that their Case is better, and the other worse, than they really are. I speak not here of those who leave the World in an atheistical and stupid State, of such as sink into the Grave without any Warning, or are
deprived

deprived of the free Exercise of their reasonable Powers. But I would be understood of such, who, professing to believe future Retributions, cannot avoid the Consideration of their latter End ; and, upon such a Consideration, see Reason to conclude that they are utterly unprepared for their important Change. These Persons are subject to *the Sting of Death*, i. e. to every Thing, which renders Death formidable to human Nature. As Sin was the Cause of Death, so it is consequentially of all the bitter Ingredients thereof, and of those terrible Presages, which Sinners Minds suggest to them, when they have a near View of their Departure hence.

- THAT is a Season, when such Men's Sins will be *sure to find them out*. There is no Comfort to be derived from their Friends, or Enjoyments. Their own Minds will then accuse and condemn them, when they cast their Eye to that awful Tribunal, the Prospect of which must overwhelm them with the Terrors of future Vengeance ! How will they tremble before that righteous Judge, whose Goodness they have slighted, and whose Power they

they have dared and despised ! How joyfully would they then receive him as their Saviour, whose Sacrifice they contemned, and whose *Blood they trampled upon, as an unholy Thing* ? But, alas, it will be then too late ; the Wounds, which Sin hath made in their Souls, will prove mortal ! And how fast a Hold will they endeavour to take of this World, when called to part with it ? Like Persons drowning, they will snatch at every thing which seems to afford even the most slender Prospect of Life.

III. *THE last Thing proposed, was to inform you, to what it is owing that the Fear of Death is so far subdued, in good Men.*

THAT the Dread of it is in a great Measure overcome, by Persons of this Character, appears from the triumphant Manner in which the Apostle speaks in the Text : *O Death, where is thy Sting ? O Grave, where is thy Victory ?* Tho' the most advanced Christians are so sensible of their Imperfections, that they dare not stand the Trial of strict and impartial Justice ; yet if they are conscious to themselves that they have acted with Integrity, both in regard to God, and Man, and by such a Conduct secured the

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pleasing Testimony of their own Consciences; they have many Arguments of Encouragement to build their Hope, and Joy upon.

THO' their Souls will cease to inhabit these corruptible and mortal Bodies, yet they are fully satisfied this is not an Extinction of Being. Upon a careful Review of their Lives, they find, by the divine Aid, they have made a Provision for that spiritual Part, which shall survive the Body; and thereby prevented many Reflections upon unpardoned Guilt, which distress the Minds of others. They experience that their present Bodies very much clog and incumber their Souls in their Operations, and confine them to a narrow Prospect; which Prospect will be greatly enlarged, when they exchange Worlds. They are informed by the Word of Truth, that these gross and earthly Tabernacles can have no Place in the pure Regions of Light and Glory, nor *Corruption inherit Incorruption*; and that, though Body and Soul shall part for a Time, yet they shall be united again, never to be separated more, and become more agreeable Companions than heretofore.

DEATH

DEATH indeed deprives good Men, as well as others, of the Enjoyments of the present Life ; but under that Loss they are not so unhappy, as those must be, whose chief Felicity is placed here. It is not expected by them, that any such changeable Scenes, as this Earth presents to them, should endure long. The present World is not considered as their Inheritance and Home, but as a State of Growth and Improvement ; where they are gradually trained up for that Perfection, which Death alone will introduce them to. And therefore they cannot prevail upon themselves to place any great Value upon those Enjoyments, which are unsatisfactory, while possessed ; and cause a great Degree of Vexation, at Parting.

It must be confessed, that good Men, when they die, pass to a State which is in a great Measure unknown to them ; but yet not so much unknown, as to be a Discouragement to their Faith, Hope, and Joy. The unseen Happiness is represented to them, and considered by them, under such Images as declare its Greatness ; and that it is something far beyond their present

sent Conceptions. That it consists in an intimate Fruition of their heavenly Father, and compassionate Redeemer; and in a delightful Converse with holy Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect; and in an entire Exemption from all Sin and Misery.

THOUGH all shall by Death be delivered over to the Judgment of the great Day, yet the Interest which good Men have in the Merits and Mediation of the Redeemer; will enable them to lift up their Heads with Joy, at that Time: *The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law; but Thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57. Our Saviour drew out the poisonous Sting of Death, by his own Death; triumphed over it, by his Resurrection; and is invested with Power to exalt his faithful Disciples to a State of immortal Glory. No Wonder therefore that Persons of that Character should, even at the Mouth of the Grave, view another Life without Confusion; since the Maker of all Things is their reconciled Father, and the appointed Judge of the World their Advocate.

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AND as Death hath no Sting, with regard to their Souls, so it will obtain no lasting Victory, in relation to their Bodies; which, like Seed, are only buried in the Earth, to rise from it again with renewed Beauty, and Vigour. As the human Nature consists of Soul and Body, so our compleat Happiness requires their Reunion; and then will our heavenly Father publicly own and avow us as his Offspring, when he raiseth our dead Bodies to a glorious and immortal Life, and *Death shall be swallowed up in Victory*.—Thus I have informed you, to what it is owing, that the Fear of Death is so far subdued in good Men, as is plainly intimated by the Apostle, when he cries out: *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?*

THAT, which directed my Thoughts to this Passage of holy Writ, was the Decease of our Friend, or rather the common Friend of Mankind, *Mr. Anthony Walburge*; by whose Death the World will sustain a Loss much to be lamented, and not easily to be repaired. *He was a Person very remarkable, both for his natural, and acquired Abilities; but at the same Time*

wholly a Stranger to that Ostentation, which too often attends the Consciousness of a superior Understanding. As his Freedom from Prejudice, and Partiality, disposed his Mind for a constant Accession of Knowledge; so, by the Assistance of a most faithful Memory, he had upon all Occasions a ready Command thereof.

THE constant and careful Study, and exemplary Practice of Religion, he esteemed his Honour; in an Age when so many consider them as a Reproach. His Piety towards God was unaffected, and manly; and his Respect to a divine Revelation conspicuous. Though he read with due Attention, and Impartiality, the many Objections which have been industriously propagated, by the Enemies of the Gospel; yet they only tended to establish his Belief of it.

NOTHING but Indisposition of Body, prevented his stated Attendance on the several Parts of God's Worship, in the solemn Assemblies; nor was I ever acquainted with a more attentive Hearer than he was. He appeared to have such an accurate Discernment, as to the Truth, and Importance of the Doctrines and Duties of Religion; that

that his distinguishing Judgment would have caused some Anxiety in the Preacher, had not his Candor been equal to it.

IT was a shining Part of his Character, that, in Imitation of our common Parent, who is good to all, he manifested a general Benevolence to Mankind; and constantly employed his Strength, and made Use of his Ability, and Substance; for the Relief of many helpless, and deserving Objects. The Share which he accepted in several public Trusts, in Compliance with his Friends Importunity; discovered the Sense they had both of his Ability, and Faithfulness: Nor were they ever disappointed as to one, or the other.

HE was remarkable for a most amiable, and engaging Temper. How cautious he was not to give Offence to any, how affable, condescending, and easy of Access; all that knew him can testify. No one made more charitable Allowances for the Prejudices of Education, and those Defects of human Nature which are consistent with Integrity; nor were his charitable Opinion, or Confidence, limited to any particular Denomination of Christians.

HE conferred Favours in so graceful a Manner, that the Gratifying of his own Inclination (next to the Obligations of Religion) seemed to be his only View; and therefore took Care not to lay any uneasy Obligations upon those, who reaped the Benefits of his Kindness. Religion, which in some good Men hath a forbidding Aspect, on Account of the disagreeable Dress in which it shews itself; in him appeared in the most amiable Attire.

I SHALL only add, that though the Pains, which he continually endured, must sometimes make him a Burden to himself; yet he was peculiarly cautious not to become so to others. He had for many Years been subject to one of the most excruciating Disorders, that human Nature is liable to; yet such was his Resolution to bear his own Burden, and his Unwillingness to have others share with him; that few of his Friends were acquainted with his Complaints. His Distemper (which was the Stone) had much impaired his Health, and seemed to have laid a Foundation for a lingering Life of Misery; but the great Disposer of all Events saw fit,

fit, by the Intervention of a Fever (in his fiftieth Year) to give him a Dismission to those undisturbed Regions, where the Weary are at Rest.—Upon a Review of the exemplary Conduct of the Deceased, I would recommend to myself and you the following brief, but comprehensive Advice: *Let us go, and do likewise.*

WHEN I composed this Discourse, I had not the least Thought of making it public ; but a Regard to the Memory of so valuable a Name, and the Hopes of making some Impressions upon the Living, suitable to the Voice of Providence (in Conjunction with some other Arguments) have inclined me to let it see the Light.— The due Improvement of the Subject will in Part appear from the following Particulars :

I. I SHALL endeavour to vindicate the Providence of God, in the Death of Mankind. If we consider the many different Ways, in which Men are liable to the Loss of Life ; it will appear, that a perpetual Residence in this World cannot be expected, without a continued Miracle.

cle. Our violent and ungoverned Passions are often the Destruction of ourselves, and others. We are very much endangered from the Brute Creation, and fall a Sacrifice to their Rage, or Hunger. Infectious Air, poisonous Plants and Drugs, and a numerous Tribe of Diseases, and Accidents are at Hand, to put a Period to our Days. And it is difficult to apprehend how the World could be governed, as long as Men continue in a Course of Sin; if they were to enjoy an immortal Life here. If notorious Transgressors were not frequently cut off by the Hand of public Justice, or the more remarkable Judgments of God; the World would be in a much worse State than it is.

AN immortal Life, in our present Circumstances, can by no Means be agreeable. Indeed, if we were constantly to enjoy a vigorous State of Health, and live in Plenty and Prosperity; a Continuance here might appear more desirable. But, on the other Hand, there are so many bitter Ingredients infused into the Cup of Life, as often incline us to nauseate it. Though *Job* is mentioned

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as an uncommon Instance of Patience, yet the Evils of Life pressed him so hard, as to draw from him very bitter Complaints, insomuch that he assures us, *he would not live always*; and speaks of Death as a most desirable Retreat. And it may be further considered, that this World is not a Place fit for final Rewards, and Punishments, where good and bad Men are blended together, and must in some Degree become Partakers of each other's Happiness and Misery; and therefore we are assured that, previous to a full and compleat Retribution, there will be a Separation between them.

2. If we would join with the Apostle in his triumphant Song, let us endeavour after a lively and vigorous Faith, and Hope in God, and get a fuller Acquaintance with the unseen Glory. And indeed it is the noblest Exercise of such a Faith, and Hope, in Persons as yet but little acquainted with the celestial Kingdom; to resign up their Spirits to the Maker thereof, at his Call. None but those who have a firm Persuasion of, and a steady Dependence upon the perfect Power,

Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness of their heavenly Father ; can cheerfully forsake their earthly Friends, and Accommodations, and rely on the Promises of an unseen World.

ANOTHER Thing which will contribute to make the Thoughts of Death comfortable, and add to our Triumph at that Day ; is an intimate Acquaintance with the unseen World. It is with Reluctance that we remove to a distant Country, which we know little of ; but, though we have not seen the promised Land with these bodily Eyes, yet the Information which we have received about it, may be depended upon ; so that we are not to be considered as entire Strangers to the Constitution, Inhabitants, or Employment of Heaven. And, by how much the brighter Views and fuller Assurances we have of our approaching Inheritance, so much the better shall we be prepared to relish that *Joy, which is unspeakable, and full of Glory.*

3. THE Consideration of this Passage of Scripture may shew, how much we are indebted to the Grace of the Gospel,

pel, for the Hopes which we have beyond the Grave. The Heathens at best had but a gloomy, and doubtful Prospect of Futurity; their Hopes were built on dark Conjectures, and consequently could have no great and lasting Influence upon their Manners; but Christ, by *bringing Life and Immortality to Light*, hath removed that Veil which overspread their Minds, and brought the Realms of Light into a near View.

THE Voice from Heaven hath declared those *blessed who die in the Lord*, i. e. whose Temper and Life, when they come to die, appear to have been conformable to the Rule of the Gospel, and the Example of Christ; and that Blessedness is insured to them by Covenant and Promise, so that *Christ in them* is become *their Hope of Glory*. And this will inable good Men to *lift up their Heads with Joy, when their Redemption draweth nigh. Light is sown for the Righteous, and Gladness for the Upright in Heart*; and what was affirmed of God's People, in relation to their Captivity, and Deliverance from it; may in a more exalted Sense be applied to them: *They that sow in Tears, shall reap in Joy.*
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He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious Seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his Sheaves with him.
 Pf. cxxvi. 5, 6.

4. THE many disagreeable Circumstances which we meet with in this State of Trial, as well as that unfading Happiness we hope for hereafter; should reconcile us to the Thoughts both of our own and our Friends Decease, if they and we are of the Number of those who live to Christ. We are but Pilgrims and Sojourners here, and often meet with disagreeable Treatment, which should wean us from an intense Love of Earth. The rugged, and thorny Steps of Life; the dangerous Snares, every-where spread for our Feet; and the unavoidable Fatigues of the Christian Warfare: should incline us to look with Pleasure to our Home. The vicious Customs, the corrupt Examples, and strange Infatuation which hath seized a great Part of the World; should reconcile us to the Thoughts of laying down these Tabernacles, and getting out of the Reach of Temptations: especially when we consider how great our Balance of Happiness will be, by exchanging this World for that, where the *Righ-*
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trous shall shine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.

AND since these Considerations generally affect all good Men, in the like Manner ; they should help to alleviate our Grief, when our pious Friends are removed from us by Death, and advanced to a more safe and advanced Station in God's Family. We are assured, that, *when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they, together with us, shall receive a Crown of Glory, which fadeth not away*; which should be Matter of strong Consolation to both. I shall conclude with the Apostle's Exhortation, which is connected with the Words of the Text : *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

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